



Franklin Conservation District

55 Federal Street, Greenfield MA 01301

Sawmill River Restoration - An Ecosystem Approach

**Public Information Meeting
Thursday April 5, 2012 7 pm
Montague Public Safety Complex
180 Turnpike Road, Turners Falls**

Notes from the Question and Answer Session *(Taken by D. Shriver. Matt Varrell and Carolyn Ness responded to questions.)*

Q: Looks like the project will create good habitat for fisheries. Can kayaks pass over the rock cross vanes during periods of low flow?

A: The current condition in the Sawmill is dead flat. The water is the same depth in the project reach. The cross vanes will direct water toward the middle of the of the river and help create a deeper channel in the center. The channel may be somewhat narrow, but will allow better passage in low flows. The project will also go through the Chapter 91 permitting process where we'll have to show that we are not impeding a navigable waterway.

Q: Have you identified Priority Habitat and associated species?

A: Yes, the site is designated by NHESP as Priority Habitat. We know that two Species of Concern, the Wood Turtle and Longnose Sucker may be associated with the site. Their habitat should benefit from the project.

Q: Will the structures you propose be substantial enough to withstand flooding?

A: Yes, MA DEP had this concern, too, and we reassured them that the cross vanes and other structures will stay in place as constructed even in floods. The cross vanes use four ton boulders that are set into the riverbed in an interlocking manner. We will work with a construction contractor who is experienced in this type of installation.

Q: Root wads, are they substantial enough to withstand flooding?

A: Yes, those too will be dug deeply into the riverbank and held in place with boulders.

A: Sites on the Deerfield River where we installed similar structures withstood Tropical Storm Irene without shifting at all.

Q: Given some major storms in 1996 and early 2000's that were uniquely intense, will this stuff stand?

A: The Deerfield River had a 30-foot wall of water come through with Tropical Storm Irene and nothing shifted or moved the slightest bit. This is a good project in that it protects road infrastructure and improves habitat. We need to do this over numerous segments of the Sawmill to have a good impact.

Q: Are you considering future segments of the Sawmill in other locations?

A: This project is a stand-alone as currently conceived, but we have identified other areas up and downstream of the project site that could dovetail with this one.

It is only a matter of time until the Sawmill River erodes into Main Street. If we don't do this restoration now, then when the next big storm event occurs, the Town will have to dump rock to protect the road. But that just moves the problem downstream and does not create a lasting solution.

A: We are working to be proactive to protect the road, reduce stream velocity and improve habitat.

Q: Will you monitor the before and after conditions?

A: We will be watching the site since the Conservation District will apply for future grants for Sawmill restoration. We will connect with the local Highway Department and keep an eye on the site and seek information from Town staff.

A: This could be a good project for schools or Scouts to collect data.

Audience Comment: This is a great project. For ten years the Conservation Commission and Department of Public Works have worked to figure out what to do with the river. This looks like a good solution.